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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST BATTALION,  
85TH MOUNTAIN INFANTRY,  
(10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION)  
NORTH OF BAGNI DI LUCCA, ITALY,  
20 JANUARY--12 FEBRUARY, 1945  
(NORTH APENNINES CAMPAIGN)

(Personal experience of a Battalion S-3)

Type of operation described: COMBAT PATROLS

Captain Edward H. Simpson, Infantry

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INTRODUCTION

The 10th Mountain Division, the only organization of its kind in the history of the United States Army, joined Lieutenant General Lucian K. Truscott's famed Fifth Army in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations in January, 1945, at a time when the battle to oust the German forces from Italy had been almost completely stalled by a combination of "mud, mountains", deep snow and the enemy. (1)

The fact that this new division was committed at such a quiet time proved to be a lucky "break" as it gave combat unit commanders a chance to get their men physically hardened and partially "battle conditioned" before being used in a major offensive action. (2)

One of the units of the 10th Mountain Division which received its initial "breaking in" during this inactive period was the 1st Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry Regiment. This monograph will deal with this battalion's first three weeks in combat--- from 20 January to 12 February, 1945. The locale was northern Italy, in the zone of action of the U.S. IV Corps, and the mountains which the men of the 1st Battalion found themselves patrolling were much the same as those in which they had received their basic and unit training in the United States. (3)

This training started in July, 1943, when the 85th Mount-

(1) A-9, A-1, A-2, A-3, A-6 (A-9, page 24); (2) A-2, page 4;  
(3) A-6, pages 8-16, personal knowledge, self.

ain Infantry was activated at Camp Hale, Colorado, as part of the 10th Light Division (Alpine), later re-designated the 10th Mountain Division. (4)

The trials and tribulations of this period will not be considered here, but a very brief description of the character of mountain training, and of the special equipment used, will serve to orient the reader on points to be covered later in this monograph.

Every unit of the mountain division received thorough training in mountain climbing and mountain marching. The use of animal transport was stressed, with all personnel getting training in mule packing. These, and many other factors of which survival in mountain operations depends, were presented in addition to the more common basic principles of infantry training. (5)

During the winter months the use of skis and snowshoes became a "must" as all training was carried on in and over snow which ranged in depth from two to ten feet. Regimental ski schools were established and every infantryman was required to pass a military ski qualification test as part of his "P.O.M." record. At the same time winter bivouacs and field problems taught troops to live and operate in the open in sub-zero temperatures. (6)

A great variety of winter and mountain equipment was necessary to properly conduct this specialized training, and all personnel received instruction in the use and care of it. As an example of the special individual equipment, consider the fact that every man had an Arctic-type sleeping bag, a pair of ski-mountain boots for sub-zero weather, a pair of shoe-pacs

(4) A-1, pages 2 & 4; (5) (6) personal knowledge, self.

for the periods of wet-cold. Clothing consisted of various types of garments embodying the "layer" principle of maintaining body warmth. (7)

One of the most important single factors of the entire training program was the emphasis placed on teaching every man to take care of himself and his weapons and equipment under all conditions of terrain and climate.

This phase of training was dictated by both military and civilian experience in mountain living. (8)

All of this specialized training was carried on in an area of the Rocky Mountains, in Colorado, lying between 9,000 and 13,000 feet in elevation. (9)

The subject unit of this monograph, the 1st Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry, arrived at Staging Area No. 3, near Pisa, Italy, on 15 January, 1945. Four days were spent in this area during which baggage was unpacked, weapons cleaned of protective coating, ammunition issued, and with short conditioning marches prescribed for all personnel. (10)

At this time all units of the 10th Mountain Division then in Italy, including the 85th, 86th and 87th Mountain Infantry Regiments, were placed under the operational control of Task Force 45, a provisional command which had been formed the previous autumn and which was composed of anti-aircraft artillery personnel who had been "converted" into infantrymen. Task Force 45 was a part of the U.S. IV Corps, under the command of Major General Willis D. Crittenberger. (11)

The IV Corps was one of the two U.S. Corps making up the Fifth Army, the other being II Corps. (12)

(7,8) personal knowledge, self; (9) A-1, page 2; (10) A-6, page 8; (11) A-7, page 7; (12) A-9, page 23.

The Allied Forces in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations in January, 1945, consisted of the U.S. Fifth and the British Eighth Armies and was known as the 15th Army Group. (13)

The Allied offensive which had opened in May, 1944, had been halted in December, 1944, a few miles short of the major objective---the Po Valley---by a combination of bad weather (which paralyzed supply functions with mud and snow) and lack of fresh troops to send against the faltering German. The Christmas offensive which was to have crashed through into Bologna and the Po Valley had to be cancelled when several British divisions were transferred to France. (14)

The "Gothic Line" offensive had halted along a line which ran, roughly, from the Ligurian coast a few miles south of Massa northeast to within ten miles of Bologna. From that "high tide" location below Monte Adone the front twisted eastward until it reached the Adriatic coast south of Ravenna. The Fifth Army held the rugged two thirds of this front while the Eighth Army occupied the more rolling remainder. (15; and Map A, attached)

The German High Command in Italy had pitted its 51st Mountain Corps against the U.S. IV Corps. The LI Mountain Corps consisted of the 148th and 232nd Infantry Divisions, several separate mountain battalions, and two Italian Fascist divisions---the Italia and the San Marco Marine. These dispositions were as of 15 January, 1945. (16)

Opposite the Task Force 45 zone the Germans had the 232nd Fusilier Battalion and the 2nd Battalion, 1044th Infantry. The 4th Mountain Battalion (Separate), one of the crack Nazi Alpine units, was also known to be on anti-partisan duty in this area. (17)

(13, 14) A-9, page 24; (15) A-7, page 4; (16) A-4, page 18;  
(17) A-3, page 18.

The U.S. IV Corps was composed of the 92nd Division, Task Force 45 (which was now composed of elements of the 10th Mountain Division], the 1st Division, Brazilian Expeditionary Force, and the 473rd Regimental Combat Team. (18)

The IV Corps front extended over a distance of 75 miles from the Ligurian coast south of Massa to the town of Poretta Terme, which was located on the boundary between the II and IV Corps. (19; Map B attached.)

The 92nd Division occupied the sector from the Ligurian coast east to the 26th Easting, which runs just west of the town of Bagni di Lucca. (20; Map B attached.)

Task Force 45 was in the center sector of the IV Corps zone and occupied territory east from the 25th Easting to Poretta Terme. (21; Map B attached.)

The Brazilian division occupied a triangle of territory between the Task Force 45-BEF boundary and the corps boundary to the east. (22; Map B attached.)

At the time the events in this monograph took place all offensive action in the 5th Army area had been postponed until a date to be announced later because of the diversionary German attack in the Serchio River valley in late December and also because of the shortage of combat troops in Italy. The only missions assigned combat elements of the IV Corps were to patrol vigorously, gain information of the enemy, and capture prisoners. (23)

On 17 January, 1945, Colonel Raymond C. Barlow, commanding the 85th Mountain Infantry, received a warning order to be prepared to take over a portion of the Task Force 45 front being held

(18) A-3, page 17; (19) A-4, page 14; (20, 21, 22) A-7, plate II;  
(23) A-7, page 7.



by the 86th Mountain Infantry, which had already been in "the line" for some two weeks. (24) (Map B)

Battalion commanders were alerted and orders issued for a staff reconnaissance of the sector to be occupied. (25)

Lieutenant Colonel Donald J. Woolley, commanding the 1st Battalion, took his S-2 and S-3 with him and drove to Campo Tizzoro, where Task Force 45 headquarters was located. (26) (Map B)

At a conference there the 1st Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry, was ordered to take over the western sector of the Task Force zone--an area extending from Bagni di Lucca east for 21 miles to La Lima, which marked the boundary between the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the regiment. (27) (Map B)

Lieutenant Colonel Woolley and his two staff officers immediately went to Bagni di Lucca and contacted the C.O. of Company I, 86th Mountain Infantry, which was the unit then garrisoning the sector which the 1st Battalion would soon take over. (28)

A hasty foot reconnaissance in the vicinity of Bagni di Lucca convinced the 1st Battalion commander that terrain would be just as much a problem as the enemy was expected to be. (29)

Captain Duke Watson, commanding Company I, 86th Mountain Infantry, explained the enemy and friendly situation in his sector as follows:

"We have been in this area two weeks and have made contact with the Germans just once. That was on 15 January near Rimessa, a small hamlet about eight miles north of here. We were ambushed while on a reconnaissance patrol and our partisan guide was killed. Civilians living in Montefegatesi, another village

(24) A-6, page 8; (25) A-6, page 8; (26, 27) personal knowledge, self, & A-7, plate II; (28, 29) personal knowledge, self.

about five miles above here, reported to the OSS that a German patrol was in that vicinity and had stolen several goats and sheep two days ago.

"My company is spread very thin over this huge sector. I have one platoon operating a half-track patrol between Bagni di Lucca and La Lima. This patrol has three half-tracks, each armed with quadruple-mount 50-caliber machine guns. We run this patrol at various hours of the day and night, and occasionally fire a few rounds to impress the civilians.

"My other two rifle platoons I have split up into sections and have outposted several small villages just above Bagni di Lucca with them. I will be able to furnish you with guides to lead your units into position whenever you are definitely ordered to relieve me." (30) (Map B)

The 1st Battalion S-3 made arrangements with Captain Watson to take over the villa which he was using as a command post and also to take over the existing communications lines between Bagni di Lucca and Campo Tizzoro. (31)

The battalion commander and his S-3 then took a map of the area, climbed high on the ridge above Bagni di Lucca and made a brief terrain analysis of the area north of the town. (32)

Lieutenant Colonel Woolley and his party returned to the staging area at Pisa late that night. Plans were made to return to Bagni di Lucca on 19 January with all the company commanders of the 1st Battalion for a complete reconnaissance of the sector. (33)

The above plan was put into operation on 19 January and on completion of the reconnaissance the battalion commander issued

(30, 31, 33) personal knowledge, self; (32) personal reconnaissance, self.

his orders for the eventual relief of Company I, 86th Mountain Infantry. (34)

Arriving back at the staging area about 2200 hours, 19 January, the battalion commander was informed that orders had been received to move the battalion into the Bagni di Lucca sector the next day, 20 January. (35)

#### TERRAIN ANALYSIS

The sector into which the 1st Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry, had been ordered to move can be adequately described in just one word: RUGGED.

Bagni di Lucca, a small summer resort famed for its natural hot springs, is situated at the confluence of the Serchio and Lima rivers. It lies at an elevation of about 700 feet above sea level.

(Map C, attached, shows clearly the towns, streams, road net, and ground form of the sector.)

This little town, in which the command post of the 1st Battalion was located during the entire operation, could be described as the apex of an inverted triangle within which lay the battalion's zone of operations.

The Lima river, a large mountain torrent, formed the eastern boundary of the sector. The 25th Easting, which also formed the boundary between the 92nd Division and Task Force 45, marked the western confine.

The base of the inverted triangle, nine miles due north, was formed by the backbone ridge of the Apennine range and was marked more distinctly by three perpetually snow-capped peaks---

(35) personal knowledge, self; A-6, page 8.

Alpe tre Potenza (6,050 feet), Fammia Morte (5,600 feet), and Monte Rondinaio (5,950 feet). These jagged mountains, and their connecting ridges, were arranged in a great semi-circle around a huge bowl formed by the drainage of the Fegana river, a stream which emptied into the Serchio river two miles west of Bagni di Lucca.

Three ridges, all of which converged towards the apex of the terrain triangle being described, spoked south from the high mountains and tended to complete the bowl formation already described above. These ridges also formed the principle routes of approach into the 1st Battalion sector; and, conversely, into the mountains from Bagni di Lucca.

The longest and highest of these three ridges hooked onto Alpe tre Potenza on the east and then curved sharply southwest and rose to form Monte Mosca (4,500 feet). From Monte Mosca this ridge branched, the main part running southwest until it ended at the confluence of the Serchio and Lima rivers. It was this ridge which offered the greatest threat to the battalion's position.

The Fegana river, a raging mountain stream, had cut a deep gorge through the lower foothills in making its way down from the bowl in which it got its start. Along this gorge, through the town of Tereglio, ran a precarious road which the Germans had blown-out in several places during their retreat the autumn before. This road was to play an important part in the operations of the 1st Battalion.

To the northeast, along Highway No. 12, the mountains rose so steeply, were so rugged, and were so deeply covered with snow that no special defensive measures were deemed necessary in the

battalion zone besides the half-track patrol which operated along this highway as far as La Lima.

A map and field glass reconnaissance of the northern mountains, which were then held by the enemy, revealed that in order to mount an attack against the 1st Battalion the Germans would be forced to move across alpine terrain on which lay at least 15 feet of snow and which was only crossed by a few mule tracks. The Germans were known to have several observation posts on top of Alpe tre Potenza and Femmina Morte; were believed to have one or two outposts in the Fegana "bowl"; and maintained their headquarters at a ski resort at Abetone.

From this terrain analysis it was concluded that operations in the sector by either side would be limited because of the extremely rough terrain and the deep snow cover. (36)

THE 1ST BATTALION, 85TH MOUNTAIN INFANTRY,  
AT BAGNI DI LUCCA, 20-25 JANUARY, 1945

The 1st Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry, began its move from Pisa (staging area) to Bagni di Lucca early the morning of 20 January and all units had cleared into the latter town by 1500 hours that afternoon. Guides were waiting when the truck convoy arrived and within an hour all the companies, with the exception of Company C, were billeted. (37)

Company C, under the command of Captain C.P. Smith, had been ordered to outpost the Monte Mosca ridge at positions two miles north and above Bagni di Lucca and had to back pack all of its equipment up the steep paths leading up the ridge. A quarter-ton truck convoy was organized to move the company and baggage as far as Franzola, where the road ended. (See Map C) (38)

(36) reconnaissance and map study, battalion commander and self;  
(37) personal knowledge, self, and A-6, page 8--there is an error in this reference on this move; (38) personal knowledge, self.

The battalion was disposed as follows:

Company A was billeted at Bagni Caldi and was in battalion reserve. (39 a) (Map C)

Company B sent one platoon to Casa Unti and took over the operation of the half-track patrol between Bagni di Lucca and La Lima. Another platoon of Company B occupied previously prepared positions in the vicinity of San Gemignano, Longoio and San Rocco. The remainder of the company was billeted near the battalion CP. (39 b) (Map C)

Company C, with a rear CP in operation near the battalion supply point, had detachments in the following villages north of Bagni di Lucca: at Monte di Villa Lugnano, on top of the ridge, one platoon; at Monte di Villa Bugnano, Pieve di Monte di Villa, Riolo and Granaiola, two squads each. (39 c) (Map C)

Company D sent the 1st platoon and one section of the 3rd platoon to Monte di Villa Lugnano in support of Company C while the rest of the unit, for the time being, was billeted at La Villa. (39 d) (Map C)

The Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters Company was located in a fine old villa in La Villa. The place was so large that the entire company was accommodated with room to spare. The battalion CP opened at 1600 hours, 20 January. The medical detachment, motor pool, and supply establishment were set up near the CP. (39 e) (Map C)

The battalion was able to report to regiment shortly before 2400 hours, 20 January, that the relief of Company I, 86th Mountain Infantry, had been completed. The regimental CP, incidentally, was located at Limestre, 26 miles to the northeast. (40)

(39 a,b,c,d,e) personal knowledge, self; See Map C; (40) personal knowledge, self, and A-2; see Map B.

Little time was lost on 21 January in strengthening the battalion's tactical position. On this day the reconnaissance patrol was sent out by Company C to check the mountain village of Montefegatesi (Map C), where a German patrol and foraging party had been reported the week previously. The first contact was made with the 365th Infantry, 92nd Division, by another Company C patrol. (41)

On 22 January, the patrol which had visited Montefegatesi on 21 January reported that the town was an ideal place for an advance battalion outpost. Acting on this information, the battalion commander ordered Company A to move one platoon to Montefegatesi and dig defensive positions on the high ground to the north. (42)

On 23 January, the 1st platoon, Company A, led by 2nd Lt. H.L. Wusterbarth, climbed the five mile trail to Montefegatesi. The march was particularly arduous because the men were not yet in good physical condition. The fact that they were "soft" was caused by the long period of inaction at the port of embarkation and during the voyage to Italy. (43)

An "Alpini" mule transport company, composed of former Italian Alpini troops who had volunteered to serve the Allies on a non-combatant status, was assigned to the 1st Battalion. (44)

The 24th of January was a red letter day in the history of the battalion for on it enemy troops were seen for the first time. A reconnaissance patrol operating out of Montefegatesi to the summit of Monte Mosca observed 13 men in the vicinity of Rimessa, the small village in which the patrol of Company I, 86th Mountain Infantry, had been ambushed on 15 January. (45)

(41, 42, 43, 44) personal knowledge, self; (45) A-5.

A second reconnaissance patrol sent out the afternoon of 24 January also observed enemy activity near Rimessa. Three enemy were seen. (46)

On the basis of these reports the battalion commander started planning what was to be the unit's first combat mission---a raid on Rimessa scheduled for 26 January. (47)

The 2nd platoon, and the 2nd section, 3rd platoon, Company D, moved into Montefegatesi on the afternoon of 24 January in support of the A Company platoon. On this same afternoon the battalion S-3 guided the regimental commander and regimental surgeon on an inspection trip over the entire Bagni di Lucca area. During this trip, which covered eight miles, the narrow mountain road leading to Montefegatesi from Bagni di Lucca was reconnoitered and plans made to attempt to get vehicles over it. It was covered by three feet of snow in some places. (48)

25 January: using personnel of the ammunition and pioneer platoon, the S-3 directed the attempt to open the Montefegatesi road. The road was opened, but was only passable to quarter and three-quarter ton vehicles. With this route open, the battalion commander immediately ordered the 75 mm pack howitzer platoon of Headquarters Company to move to Montefegatesi and prepare for possible action in support of the forthcoming raid. (49)

Final plans for the Rimessa raid were completed on 25 January, and one platoon of Company C moved to Montefegatesi in the afternoon in readiness for the departure. The weather was clear, and the battalion commander definitely ordered the raid to be conducted during the night and early morning of 26 Jan-

(46) A-5, personal knowledge, self; (47-8) personal experience, self; (49) personal knowledge, self.



uary. The following personnel were to comprise the raiding force:

Commander: Captain Smith, Company C.

Company A: 1st platoon; Lt. Wusterbarth.

Company C: 1st platoon; 2nd Lt. Merle Decker.

Company D: 2nd platoon; 2nd section, 3rd platoon; Captain R.S. Johnson, three other officers.

Battalion Headquarters: Lieutenant Colonel Woolley, 1st Lt. I.H. Johnson, the S-2, the intelligence sergeant, a radio operator, and 2nd Lt. Benschel, the 75mm howitzer platoon leader who was to act as a forward observer in case his weapons were needed to support the raid. Remaining with the 75 mm guns was 1st Lt. R.C. Johnson, who was an ex-artilleryman and acting battery commander. (50)

Shortly before 2400 hours, 25 January, the platoon of Company A left Montefegatesi. An hour later the rest of the force followed along the same trail. (51) (Map D)

#### THE RIMESSA RAID, 26 JANUARY 1945

The little hamlet of Rimessa, the objective of the 1st Battalion's initial combat raid, lay about four miles north of Montefegatesi just at the base of the high peaks which generally marked the German front line positions. (52) (Map D)

Rimessa was well situated to be an enemy outpost. It lay astride the Tereglio road where that route ended and the only trail over the Solco Grande Pass began. It was at an elevation of approximately 3,700 feet. The only way that the raiding party could get to Rimessa was to descend into the Fegana river gorge, cross the stream at Murgeglio and then climb up into the floor of the Fegana "bowl" and then on up (50) A-5, part 1, page 2; (51-2) personal knowledge, self.

to the objective over very rough ground and from one to three feet of wet snow. (53)

The photograph (below--Fig. 1) will better illustrate the character of the terrain over which this raid---and all the others made by the 1st Battalion in this area---was conducted. The two pictures which went into making the panoramic view below were taken by the writer from the 1st Battalion observation post.



FIGURE 1

Just what equipment did the 1st Battalion have to warrant pushing operations into such terrain? There was none of the special mountaineering and winter equipment with which the unit had trained at Camp Hale. There was no winter clothing. There were some 25 pairs of skis in the battalion, but these had been issued without bindings and therefore were of no value at all. There were no snow shoes and no ice creepers. (54)

(53-4) personal knowledge, self.

The special equipment with which the division was to have been equipped on its arrival in Italy had not been forthcoming. It was later learned that this equipment had arrived in the theater, but had been allocated to the Brazilian Expeditionary Force which not only did not know how to use it but never had any inclination to do so. The only sleeping bags in the regiment had been "reserved" by the S-4 and the service company commander for their own men. (55)

The raiding party, clad in O.D. wool uniforms, thin field jackets and regulation combat boots, followed the steep and icy trail from Montefegatesi down to Murgeglio, crossed the Fegana river and started the long climb toward Rimessa. (56) (Map D)

At about 0200 hours the weather suddenly changed. Clouds quickly covered the mountains and eventually dropped so low that the raiders were engulfed in the fog. Visibility was reduced to about 50 yards. At approximately 0300 hours it began to sleet and within a short time all personnel in the raiding group were soaked to the skin and very cold. (57)

The sleet soon softened the crust on top of the snow with the result that the men were soon wallowing in from 12 to 20 inches of wet slush, which made the footing precarious. The party pushed ahead, however, and about 0700 hours reached a group of farm buildings. These houses were at first believed to be Rimessa and the two rifle platoons were immediately deployed. A thorough check of the area, however, convinced Captain Smith that they had not reached the objective and he ordered the little force to reorganize and push ahead. The Company A platoon led the advance, followed by the Battalion Headquarters (55-6) personal knowledge, self; (57) A-5, part 1.

group, the Company C platoon, and the heavy weapons bringing up the rear. The 81mm mortar section had been laying assault wire from positions selected for the mortars about 1 mile above Murgeglio but the wire ran out just as they reached the buildings. A man was left at this location with a SCR 536 and was to relay any fire orders which might be radioed to him. After a short rest the advance was resumed. (58) (Map D)

At about 0900 hours, Captain Johnson of Company D requested permission from the battalion commander for his heavy weapons people to drop out of the column and take shelter in a nearby barn. The machine gunners were nearing exhaustion as they were carrying 20,000 rounds of ammunition for their guns in addition to the weapons. This permission was granted. (59)

The morale of all personnel at this point was very low. (60)

At 0930 hours Lt. Wusterbarth reported from the head of the column that he was lost and that he could not see far enough ahead in any direction to get re-oriented. The S-2, Lt. Johnson, went forward and directed Lt. Wusterbarth toward Rimessa. (61)

The morale of the men was so low at this point that it was with great difficulty that they were persuaded to move out again. The physical condition of the men was poor as all of them were wet and chilled in addition to being at the end of their endurance. Visibility was reduced to about 30 yards by this time. (62)

Ten minutes later a machine gun suddenly opened fire on the column as it struggled over the top of a rise and both the lead scouts were hit. They fell on an open slope in full view of the enemy machine gunners, who continued to fire at their bodies. (63) (Map D)

(58-63) A-5, part 1; personal knowledge, self.

Lt. Johnson, the S-2, had been standing beside one of the scouts giving him directions when the enemy opened fire and only the fact that he jumped in the opposite direction from the scouts kept him from being wounded also. (64)

The moment firing broke out Lieutenant Colonel Woolley, who had gone forward to check the lead platoon, contacted Company C of the radio. (65)

He was able to determine that Company C was some 500 yards to the left rear and so assured himself that it was not Company C firing on Company A by mistake. (66)

Company C was ordered to move up immediately to assist the Company A platoon in the assault on the enemy positions. (67)

The battalion commander also contacted Captain Johnson, Company D, by radio and ordered him to bring the machine gun platoon up to the scene of action. (68)

In the meantime, the Company A platoon had been deployed and took up firing positions from which they could engage the enemy by fire. (69)

The Germans, besides firing automatic weapons, were shooting rifle grenades at the American troops. These proved ineffective as they exploded deep in the snow. (70)

The assault on Rimessa was delayed for 30 minutes while waiting for the Company C platoon to arrive. When it failed to reach the area at the end of the half hour, the battalion commander ordered Lt. Wusterbarth to close in on the enemy position and assault the buildings. One squad made up the maneuvering element while the other two squads formed a base of fire. (71)

Within ten minutes these orders had been carried out and the platoon was successful in assaulting the German outpost. (64-71) A-5, part 1; personal knowledge, self.

A machine gun position was overrun, one gunner was killed and another captured. (72)

During the process of checking all the buildings in the hamlet three more enemy were discovered hiding in a cellar. (73)

With Rimessa cleared of the enemy, all speed was made to give first aid to the two wounded scouts. They were carried into one of the buildings, where one of the men, Corporal Walter Van Boven, died a few minutes later. He was the first man in the 85th Mountain Infantry to be killed in action. (74)

The reason the wounded had not been cared for previously was the fact that every time a man tried to go to their aid the enemy machine gunners would open fire. The other wounded man, while seriously hurt, was successfully evacuated despite great difficulty experienced in carrying him down out of the mountains. (75)

A few minutes after all shooting had stopped the Company C platoon arrived and immediately was ordered to man a perimeter defense around the area. All personnel took a short rest before the return to Bagni di Lucca was started. (76)

Using the SCR 300, the battalion commander contacted the advance base at Montefegatesi, told them of the success of the raid, and ordered an attempt to be made to take "jeeps" over the Tereglio road. It was hoped that the light trucks of the battalion would be able to proceed far enough up this road to aid in evacuating the wounded man. (77)

Captain Jerome Turner, commander of Company A, started organizing a "jeep" convoy to attempt the trip over the Tereglio road. He had made a partial reconnaissance of the route and knew where most of the places were that the Germans had (72-7) personal knowledge, self.

blown out the roadway. Captain Turner took a crew of men "armed" with picks and shovels with him to make by-passes around the worst places, and in fact was able to construct several emergency by-passes in very quick time. (78)

How successful he was may be judged by the fact that he was able to get "jeeps" to within a quarter-mile of Murgeglio, the hamlet located where the trail from Montefegatesi crosses the Fegana river. (79)

Captain Turner had vehicles at the advanced truck head by late afternoon and immediately started up the trail towards Rimessa with a detachment of fresh troops, the battalion surgeon, and a litter team. (80)

He met the returning combat patrol just before dark and quickly took over the task of carrying the wounded man to the truck head, where he was placed on a "jeep" ambulance and taken as fast as possible to the battalion aid station, and from there to a field hospital near Lucca. (81)

The returning raiders, meanwhile, were experiencing very hard going. All personnel were so tired that when a man would slip and fall down on the icy trail it was with great difficulty that he could be persuaded to get up again. (82)

Much equipment was jettisoned along the trail. All the ammunition which had been packed up with the heavy weapons was "cached" under a large haystack and left for possible future use. (83)

Finally, about 2000 hours, all troops had reached Murgeglio and the battalion commander ordered a halt there so the men could take shelter, build fires and eat their "K" rations while waiting for Captain Turner's truck convoy to come back for them. (84)

(78-84) personal knowledge, self.

By having the trucks transport the men back to Bagni di Lucca, the battalion commander saved the troops from having to make the difficult climb from Murgeglia up to Montefegatesi. (85)

Lieutenant Colonel Woolley afterwards stated that the men were so exhausted he did not believe they could have made the climb. (86)

The "jeep" convoy was back at Murgeglia by 2200 hours, 26 January, reinforced with all of the remaining quarter and 3/4-ton trucks in the battalion and was able to carry all members of the raiding party from Murgeglia to Bagni di Lucca by 0100 hours, 27 January. (87)

The entire operation had taken 25 hours. (88)

The results of the operation were considered satisfactory despite the obvious errors which were committed during the raid. The main weakness, and one which was to be quickly remedied, was the poor physical condition of all the personnel taking part in the operation. (89)

In commenting on the operation later, the battalion commander said that he had gone on the patrol expressly for the purpose of watching some of his junior leaders and non-coms in action under actual combat conditions. "I knew that there was a tendency for troops in combat for the first time to fire a lot of ammunition at the enemy and then withdraw without putting into effect any of the basic principles of attack," he stated. "This is just what would have happened at Rimessa if I had not been nearby to 'spur' Wusterbarth into making use of the 'fire and movement' training we had all had." The battalion commander also reported that discipline was poor during the operation, but felt that the terrible weather contributed, statement, battalion C.O.; (87-9) personal knowledge, self. (86), statement, battalion C.O.; (87-9) personal knowledge, self.



ditions encountered on the raid were partly responsible for this fact. (90)

The four prisoners captured by the 1st Battalion were evacuated at the same time the wounded American was brought back. They were immediately sent to regimental headquarters. (91)

Within two hours the regimental S-2 was able to phone the 1st Battalion that the prisoners included two German mountaineers from the 232nd Fusilier Battalion, already known to be in the Abetone area, and two Italian Fascists from the 13th Company, 5th Regiment, San Marco Marine Division. The latter soldiers had only been in the line two days. (92)

The interrogation also revealed that between 18 and 20 other enemy had escaped from Rimessa, in the fog, when they realized that a superior American force was attacking them. (93)

The identification of troops from the San Marco Marine Division in the sector of the 1st Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry, was a strong object lesson in applied combat intelligence in that this Fascist unit had not been reported in the Task Force 45 sector previously. (94)

#### OPERATIONS, 27-29 JANUARY 1945

The day following the Rimessa raid was one of comparative rest for all personnel who had participated in the battalion's first combat venture. The rest of the unit, however, performed usual garrison duties. Company B, less the platoon on half-track patrol duty, was moved to Montefegatesi to take over the outpost and patrol duties at that forward base. The 2nd platoon, Company D, was moved to the same place. Some of the elements of Company C which had been outposting the villages of Monte di Villa (89,90) statement, battalion C.O.; (91-94) A-2; A-6, page 14; A-3.

Bugnano and Granaiola relieved the Company B detachments at San Gemignano and Longoio. (95) (Map C)

The weather, which had continued rainy and cold through 27 January, cleared sufficiently on 28 January for the battalion observation post above Montefegatesi to operate again. Almost as soon as the observers started scanning the enemy area they picked up the movement of a party of 19 enemy in the vicinity of Rimessa. These men were believed to be the same ones which escaped the raid of 26 January. (96)

Shortly after the enemy detachment was first observed the battalion commander and the S-3 arrived at Montefegatesi. Orders were immediately given the 75mm howitzer platoon to fire on the enemy, but by the time the guns could be put into action the enemy had disappeared behind a hill. (97)

While making a reconnaissance farther up the ridge from the OP, the battalion S-3 discovered a location from which another building---in a deep ravine above Rimessa---could be seen. Around this building enemy activity was observed. (98)

The howitzers were again alerted and fired several missions at the enemy house and personnel. The effects of this fire could not be accurately observed as the range was close to 8,000 yards. (99)

The name given the newly-located enemy position, according to maps of the area, was Ospadaletto---which means "shelter hut" in Italian. At least ten enemy were observed at this location. (100) (Map C)

The battalion observation post was ordered to move to the location from which the S-3 had picked up the new enemy "target". It was hidden from observation from the first OP by a small ridge. (101)  
(95,96) personal knowledge, self; (97-101) personal experience.

The fact that the enemy had another outpost near Rimessa spurred the battalion staff into planning another attack on him. A check with G-2 revealed that reasonably fair weather could be expected for several more days, and on this report the Ospedaletto attack was tentatively scheduled for 30 January. The "honor" of making the attack was given to Company C, which had missed out on the action at Rimessa. (102)

The preliminary plan of action, based on the experience gained in the Rimessa raid, called for Company C to climb to a knife ridge above the enemy position, build up a base of fire there and then send an assault force in on the enemy outpost and clean it out. The plan called for supporting fires from the 75mm platoon, and from one machine gun platoon of Company D from positions near Rimessa. A platoon from Company A was to make a feint to draw the attention of the enemy while the attack force got into position. (103)

The IV Corps Engineers had been very cooperative in sending a detachment to put the Murgeglio-Tereglio road into good condition. They reported that the route would be ready for heavy traffic as far as Murgeglio by 29 January, and that they would bridge a large blown-out area above Murgeglio as soon as possible. This meant that henceforth troops would be saved the long climb down from Montefegatesi en route to operations in the Rimessa "bowl". (104)

It also meant that heavy weapons could be advanced much farther into the area and that the ammunition supply for these weapons would be greatly eased. (105)

On 28 January 10th Mountain Division headquarters opened at Campo Tizzoro and all units of the division returned to parent

(102-105) personal knowledge, self.

control as of this date. (106) (Map B)

On 29 January plans were completed for the Ospedaletto patrol and Captain Smith, of Company C, took all the officers and non-commissioned officers who would go on the patrol up to the battalion OP for a field glass "reconnaissance" of the terrain over which the patrol was to operate. (107)

Troop dispositions for the Ospedaletto attack were as follows:

Company C: two rifle platoons, weapons platoon.

Company A: one rifle platoon to make a demonstration near Rimessa.

Company D: one machine gun platoon, in position above Rimessa, to support the Company C effort by fire.

75mm platoon: from positions at Montefegatesi, to fire on known enemy positions and observation posts. (108)

At 2200 hours, 29 January, the attack force left Bagni di Lucca by truck for Murgeglio. From that point they climbed directly to a trail which followed the contour around Monte Rondinaio and led directly towards the objective. (109) (Map E)

The weather was cold but clear. (110)

#### THE OSPEDALETTO RAID, 30 JANUARY 1945

The battalion commander, the S-3 and S-2 arrived at the battalion observation post before dawn on 30 January prepared to observe the operations of Company C. (111) (Map E)

A bright and sunny dawn gave promise of perfect weather for the attack. (112)

As soon as it was light enough to see all personnel at the OP manned the observation telescopes and field glasses and started (106-110) personal knowledge, self; (111, 112) personal experience.

to search for evidence of Company C, which was expected to be in position by this time on the ridge above the objective. No trace of the company could be observed in that area and a systematic visual search of the terrain leading up to the ridge was undertaken. (113)

Within a few minutes, elements of Company C were observed trying to cross a very rugged canyon into which the path they had been following led them. (114) (Map E)

The plan to follow the trail around the flank of Monte Rondinaio had been based on a terrain study made the previous day through field glasses. What the glasses did not show, however, was the fact that the route of advance was extremely difficult. In three places the trail was so deeply and steeply covered by snow and ice that foot holes had to be chopped before the men could cross. The movement over this route at night merely increased the difficulties many times. (115)

Consequently, when morning came Company C was still some 1500 yards from the ridge they wanted to be on. To add to their difficulties, the trail suddenly petered out in a very steep and rugged canyon which was deeply drifted with snow. The snow, in turn, had a crust of ice over it three inches thick. (116)

Chopping more footsteps in the ice, and aided by an improvised rope made by tying together the draw-strings from the men's field jackets, the company finally crossed the barrier and moved rapidly into the chosen area of departure. Four men were injured when they lost their footing crossing the ice slope and slid into a pile of rocks about 70 feet below. Company C was in position to start the attack at 1010 hours. (117) (Map E)

(113, 117) personal observation, self, and statements made by Capt. C.P. Smith to writer.

In the meantime, the enemy had discovered the Company A platoon and the machine gun positions near Rimessa and started firing mortar and artillery shells into the area. This fire was observed from the 1st Battalion OP, and the 75mm platoon was immediately ordered to shell enemy observation posts along the summit ridges of Alpe tre Potenza and Femmina Morte. At the same time a radio message was sent to Captain Smith ordering him to get his attack started immediately and then get his men out of the Ospedaletto area as soon as possible because of the danger from the enemy fires. (118) (Map E)

The Company C commander did not have to be told the danger of his position---directly under the enemy OPs---and quickly got his little force into action. Light machine guns, 60mm mortars and bazookas were used, in addition to rifle fire, to cover the advance of the assault team on the enemy outpost. (119)

The assault force, which was led by 1st Lt. James Lunn, got to within 200 yards of the Ospedaletto house before the enemy awoke to their danger. They immediately called for defensive fires from mortars and artillery which were emplaced north of the mountains, and these fires became so intense that Lt. Lunn's men--never before under artillery fire---literally froze in their tracks. Lunn, with great personal bravery and leadership, got his section moving quickly, stormed a German machine gun position, grabbed six prisoners and killed one more, and then executed a "tactical maneuver to the rear", as he later termed it. (120) (Map E)

All the time the assault was being pressed, the 1st Battalion's tiny artillery force of three 75mm howitzers---using (118-120) personal observation & knowledge, self.

"charge seven" and firing at extreme elevation---were covering all known enemy OPs with fire. So accurate was this shelling that the personnel in three of these positions were seen to flee. (121)

The Company D machine gunners above Rimessa also added their fires to that of the artillery, and gave overhead covering fire for Company C during its withdrawal from Ospedaletto. (122)

Company C, joined by the assault force with their bag of prisoners, started back to the truck-head at Murgeglio. The attack had taken nearly five hours from the time that Company C went into position overlooking Ospedaletto. (123)

The Company A platoon which had acted as the "decoy" in this operation, also returned to Murgeglio at this time, followed by the Company D platoon. All personnel were back in Bagri di Lucca before dark, 30 January, and the only casualties to any of our troops were the four Company C men who had fallen crossing the canyon early in the morning. (124)

The prisoners captured at Ospedaletto were all Italians and were later identified as being from the 12th Company, 5th Regiment, San Marco Marine Division. These prisoners revealed, on interrogation, that on 28 January the fire of the 1st Battalion's 75mm guns had caused the death of one officer and two men who had been on reconnaissance above Rimessa. They reported that concussion from a shellburst had blown these men off a cliff and they had fallen to their deaths. (125)

The experience and lessons learned during the 26 January (121-125) personal knowledge & observation, self.

raid at Rimessa paid big dividends on this Company C operation, and resulted in much better cooperation in all echelons. One of the big lessons learned on the Ospedaletto attack was that there is no substitute for a ground reconnaissance.

OPERATIONS, 31 JANUARY--9 FEBRUARY 1945

For the 1st Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry, as well as for the other units of the 10th Mountain Division, 31 January was a quiet day, with nothing more exciting than the usual reconnaissance and contact patrols in operation. (126)

The 1st of February was a different sort of day for the 1st Battalion, however, as the observation post---which had been moved still higher on the side of Monte Mosca---reported that a third enemy outpost could be observed nestling in the pass between the Borro al Fosso, a peak thrusting out from the northeast shoulder of Monte Rondinaio, and Femmina Morte. This new location was about 1000 yards northwest of Ospedaletto, and about 1,000 feet higher in elevation. A number of enemy were observed digging positions nearby. (127) (Map C)

The staff planners again swung into action, with Major Edward Skinner, the battalion executive officer, getting the nod as the "master mind" for the next raid. (128)

Careful study of aerial strip mosaic photos taken expressly for the use of the 1st Battalion was undertaken, and two plans were formulated. The first was to follow the ridge from Montefegatesi up over Monte Mosca, then climb to the Alpe tre Potenza massif and sweep around to the northeast of it and pick up all the enemy reported at the ski resort of Abetone. (129)

(126) A-6, page 16; (127-129) personal knowledge, self.



This plan was abandoned in favor of the alternate which called for circling behind Monte Rondinaio to the northwest and then sweeping down through the pass where the latest enemy outpost position had been located. (130)

This second plan was favored because it avoided exposing a flank of the raiding party to the enemy artillery known to be in the Passo di Abetone area. (131)

During the next few days, therefore, preparations were made for this latest expedition. A large force was to be employed, including the use of the "Alpini" pack mule company to aid the heavy weapons crews in traversing the difficult terrain expected. (132)

No ground reconnaissance was made for this projected raid despite the fact that the two previous efforts by the 1st Battalion had suffered because of lack of previous ground reconnaissance. (133)

The result was that on 5 February, after the two company raid had started out, the entire plan had to be abandoned when it was found that the northwest side of Monte Rondinaio was impassable to troops not equipped with special mountain equipment. The troops returned to Bagni di Lucca after ten hours of climbing through deep snow. (134)

The 1st Battalion suffered one casualty on this ill-fated expedition. 1st Lt. Jack Lancaster, who had been sent out with a squad of picked snipers, got lost and led his men to a peak 1500 yards from the one he was supposed to have gone to. One of the men in the main raiding group mistook him for an enemy sniper, and at a range of about 800 yards shot him through the right thigh. Lt. Lancaster was successfully evacuated after a long and very difficult effort. (135)

The 6th of February was another quiet day. (136)  
(130-136) personal knowledge, self.

On 7 February the battalion S-3 went up to the battalion observation post and made a careful terrain study of the Borro al Fosso area. After additional study of a new set of aerial photos of the same area he became convinced that a raid would have a good chance of success if routed over this peak. He presented a tentative plan for this operation to the battalion commander. (137) (Map F)

The S-3's plan was to send an officer and about 10 men, including a radio operator, to make a ground reconnaissance of the Borro al Fosso massif and find out if it would be possible to send a large body of men up and over it so that an enveloping force could hit the enemy outpost in the pass from the rear. (138)

Should the reconnaissance show that the plan would work, a two-day expedition would be sent out to undertake the mission of hitting the enemy where he least expected it. The first day the patrol would only move as far as a thick pine wood located just at timberline and directly below the main ridge leading up to the summit of Borro al Fosso. There they would bivouac for the night, move out before dawn the next morning, climb over the peak and be all around the enemy before full daylight. (139)

Lieutenant Colonel Woolley agreed to give the plan a try, and 2nd Lt. Merle Decker of Company C was asked to take the reconnaissance patrol into the selected area the following morning. Decker moved out shortly before noon on 8 February accompanied by one full rifle squad and a radio operator. (140)

Decker's patrol worked its way over the same trail that Company C had followed in its operation on 30 January, and (137-140) personal experience, self.

without too much difficulty had reached the proposed assembly area in the pine woods by 1500 hours. (141) (Map F)

The battalion S-3, at the observation post above Montefegatesi, was in contact with Decker's patrol via SCR 300 and was able to assist the patrol leader on his choice of routes by directing him around obstacles. The observation telescope played a big part in this undertaking. (142)

The reconnaissance patrol determined that the woods would make an excellent combination bivouac and assembly area. Decker decided to see what conditions were higher on the mountain and with three other men started up the main ridge to the summit. As he approached to within about 400 yards of the military crest, after clambering up the icy slopes, the observers at the battalion OP were electrified into sudden action by the sight of an enemy patrol moving directly towards Decker along the summit ridge of the same Borro al Fosso. (143) (Map F)

The patrol leader had left his radioman below under cover of the woods and the S-3 therefore had no way of warning him of the danger above him. (144)

The next thing that the operations officer thought of was to shoot a few rounds from the 75mm howitzers in the general direction of Monte Rondinaio in hopes that the shelling would scare the enemy patrol back to its base. (145)

The howitzer platoon was alerted, therefore, and within a very few moments had the first round "on the way". Unfortunately, as the guns were cold the first shot was erratic and instead of bursting to the left of and beyond the enemy it hit within 75 yards of Lt. Decker! (146)

(141-146) personal experience, self.

The next few rounds were more accurate, however, and landed where they were supposed to. The firing was so good that later information obtained from prisoners revealed that one member of this particular enemy patrol was killed by it. (147)

Unfortunately, the firing also changed Decker's mind about climbing to the summit. He had gone far enough so that he knew that the plan was feasible, however, and returned to Bagni di Lucca with much valuable information on the terrain. In honor of Lt. Decker's fine work on this patrol the enemy house in the pass was unofficially named "Decker House" and was even so described in official reports to G-2. (148)

With the plans okayed by the battalion commander, the wheels started grinding to put the plan into execution. The personnel on this combat patrol were to come from Company B as this company had not participated in any fire fights with the enemy. 1st Lt. John Creaghe, 2nd Lt. Bruce Coggins and 81 men were alerted and were soon prepared to leave on the forenoon of 9 February. This force consisted of a rifle platoon, elements of the weapons platoon, a section of heavy 81mm mortars, and a medical team. (149)

THE DECKER HOUSE RAID, 10 FEBRUARY 1945

The Baker force left on schedule 9 February with Lt. Decker guiding it over the pre-selected route to the forward assembly area, which was reached late in the afternoon. Decker returned as soon as Creaghe's force had been shown the route to the summit. (150) (Map F)

Once again the weather turned against the 1st Battalion. Shortly after dark, 9 February, clouds rolled over the mountains and it soon began to sleet. The sleet changed to wet snow (148-150) personal experience, self.

within an hour, but not soon enough to keep the poorly-equipped patrol force from being thoroughly drenched. It was here that mountain training stood these men in good stead. They hastily chopped down a number of fir trees, used the branches to make crude lean-to shelters which they could completely cover with snow, and were able to kindle small fires inside that were not visible anywhere outside. Had it not been for this the men would have had to return to Bagni di Lucca or freeze to death. (151)

The bad weather blew away before morning, however, after depositing about 18 inches of fresh snow all over the mountains. (152)

Back at Montefegatesi the battalion commander and the S-3 were at the observation post before daylight and expected to see Creaghe's little force perched on top of Borro al Fosso ready to attack. (153) (Map F)

Such was not the case, however. Because of the new fall of snow, the Company B patrol had extreme difficulty in climbing up the main ridge to the summit of the mountain. Lack of climbing equipment, such as ice axes and ropes, once again hampered our operations. (154)

The patrol reached the summit by 0800 hours, however, and within 15 minutes Lt. Creaghe had taken a squad around behind the pass, swooped down on the unprotected rear of "Decker House" and cleaned out the place. The bag of prisoners this time totalled 11, with one man killed trying to get away over the snow. In addition, three Model 42 machine guns, three Luger pistols and many other items of equipment (151-154) personal experience, self.

were "collected" by the Company B men. (155)

Before leaving "Decker House", Lt. Creaghe had his men burn the place. Then, collecting the remainder of his men from their firing positions on the mountain above, the patrol leader returned to Bagni di Lucca by way of Ospedaletto, which they also tried to burn, and Rimessa. The Company B patrol was back at the base by mid-afternoon. (156) (Map F)

On this final operation in the Bagni di Lucca sector, the Company B force had achieved complete tactical surprise. Most of the enemy garrison were still asleep inside the house when the attacking Americans hit them and had no time to man any of their weapons. (157)

Credit for the success of this operation can be divided between Decker and Creaghe---Decker for his able leadership and accurate reconnaissance, and Creaghe for his particularly aggressive leadership of the assaulting force. Creaghe, for his heroism in a later action, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. (158)

The 11 prisoners captured at "Decker House" were partly Germans, of the crack 4th Mountain Battalion, and partly Italian Fascists of the San Marco Marine Division. (159)

FINAL OPERATIONS, 11-12 FEBRUARY, 1945  
The raid on "Decker House" on 10 February ended all combat operations in the Bagni di Lucca---Abetone sector for the 1st Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry. The 10th Mountain Division had already been alerted that it was to make its first major attack as a division on 19 and 20 February, at Monte Belvedere, and all battalions were shuffled around so that each got a chance to make one or two practice night attacks (155-159) personal experience, self.

up a mountain which resembled Monte Belvedere. (160)

The 1st Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry, took part in one of these "rehearsals" on 12 February, and on the 14th of the month started moving elements of the battalion into the Lizzano-Belvedere sector. On 16 February the 473rd Regimental Combat Team's 1st Battalion relieved the 1st Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry, in the Bagni di Lucca sector.

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

A careful analysis of the operations of the 1st Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry, during the three week period in the Bagni di Lucca sector reveals that while no definite attack mission had been given this unit it still operated with enough aggression to push the enemy back more than five miles, killed seven of his soldiers and captured 21 more of them. The 1st Battalion during these operations lost one man killed, one man wounded by the enemy, and one officer wounded by accident.

The subject unit also received its "baptism of fire" while in the lines and profited by its experience to a marked extent as was shown by its later combat record.

The fact that the 1st Battalion had three weeks in a combat zone in which to operate without being committed in a major attack gave officers and men plenty of opportunity to put to the supreme test all the principles of war which they had learned during their training prior to combat.

Some of the actions of the battalion, its staff, and of higher echelons of command which will bear criticism include:

1. Plans for the first combat patrol were too ambitious in view of the poor physical condition of all personnel.
2. Failure of the battalion and subordinate commanders to make adequate ground reconnaissance before the first two raids.

3. Failure of the battalion staff to work out a plan of

liaison with the band of Italian partisans in their sector, with the result that the battalion did not benefit from the expert knowledge of these people concerning the mountains in which the unit was operating.

4. Failure of higher echelons to understand the problems of mountain operations, with the result that many of their demands for long-range patrols were impossible to fulfill.

5. Failure of higher echelons to provide the special equipment and clothing which the mountain division had been trained to use.

6. The enemy for failing to maintain any sort of reconnaissance patrols along his front in the "Rimessa bowl".

The success of the 1st Battalion, 85th Mountain Infantry, in its initial combat operations is attributable mainly to the leadership and ability of junior officers and non-commissioned officers.

The fire of the 75mm pack howitzers proved to be so effective that in subsequent operations they played a major part in every attack plan.

All personnel of the battalion learned to have confidence in the infantry weapons. The only weapon which did not prove to be consistently effective was the rocket launcher, and the reason for its failure was the fact that the rockets would not detonate in snow. The sub-machine gun was one of the most popular automatic weapons.

#### LESSONS LEARNED

Some of the lessons learned from this operation are:

1. Mountainous terrain offers no insuperable obstacles to military operations if the troops are properly equipped, clothed, supplied, and trained.



2. Mountain warfare is characterized primarily by the difficulties which the terrain offers to movement.

3. In mountain combat the commander is limited by the terrain as to the means which he may employ. Success in mountain combat depends more upon proper adaptation of the available means to the terrain than it does upon their power.

4. Maneuver of small units and the initiative and leadership of subordinate commanders are of the highest importance in mountain warfare.

5. When formulating plans for operations the possibility of sudden changes in the weather must be considered.

6. Physical hardening of personnel entering mountain combat is a prime essential.

7. Special training and equipment are essential for success in mountain warfare.

8. Mountain operations call for the ability to carry heavy loads on long marches over rough trails.

9. Decentralization of operations is characteristic of mountain operations.

10. The howitzer is an ideal weapon for mountainous terrain because of its high angle of fire.

11. Scarcity of good roads in mountainous terrain makes the problem of supply and evacuation much more difficult.

12. Weapons function better in extreme cold if they are kept dry of oil.

13. The SCR 300 radio is an ideal means of communications in mountain terrain where "line of sight" conditions prevail.

14. Machine gun units seldom find field of fire which permit them to utilize full grazing effect.

15. The normal rate of march must be reduced in mountain operations as troops tire quickly when forced to climb too fast.